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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9889
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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/USFJ PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 1742
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 5529
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7115
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2675
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 3132
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 3180
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - GAZA AND GAS ROW
BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE

11. LEAD STORIES: Front-page stories on Thursday morning included the reported release of a Japanese female doctor who has been held hostage in Somalia since September as well a decision by a Russian state company to completely halt its natural gas exports to Europe through Ukraine.

12. "Tragedy in Gaza Continues" The liberal Asahi editorialized (1/8): "Given that a number of civilians have been killed and injured due to a series of Israeli attacks in Gaza, these acts may constitute a random assault on civilians and non-combat zones, which is prohibited under the international law. The cruelty of the attacks is tantamount to genocide. The situation even raises doubts about the *raison d'être* of the UN.... Without any action by the international community, the tragedy will continue, resulting in additional suffering by civilians. Israel must completely halt its military operation."

13. "Israel's Makeshift Flexibility" On the Israeli decision to temporarily stop an attack on Gaza, a Jerusalem correspondent for the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri wrote (1/8): "Behind the Israeli decision lies its shrewd strategy of continuing its military operation in Gaza by temporarily demonstrating a flexible stance in view of mounting international calls for Tel Aviv to undertake a ceasefire."

14. "Key Question Is How to Control Borders" On Egypt's proposal concerning a ceasefire in Gaza, the business-oriented Nikkei reported from Cairo (1/8): "A success of a ceasefire arrangement proposed by President Mubarak relies on how to manage the Gaza borders in order to prevent weapons from keep flowing into the segregated area."

14. "Russia Politicizes Natural Gas Pipelines" On Moscow's decision to halt the provision of natural gas to Europe through Ukraine, a Moscow-based reporter for the liberal Mainichi stated (1/8): "The Russian decision exposed the risk of oil and natural gas pipelines being possibly utilized for political purposes, as the construction of such pipelines perpetuate the supplier-consumer relationship."

SCHIEFFER